UNITED
NATIONS

DP

Governing Council
of the
United Nations
Development Programme

Distr.
GENERAL

DP/CP/NER/NOTE/5
10 March 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Thirty-ninth session
4-29 May 1992, Geneva
Item 6 of the provisional agenda

PROGRAMME PLANNING

Country and intercountry programmes and projects

FIFTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR NIGER

Note by the Administrator

I. THE PROGRAMMING PROCESS

1. The programming exercise was undertaken through a process of dialogues with the Government which took place in three phases.

2. The first phase consisted of the mid-term review of the fourth country programme in November 1989, followed by an evaluation of that programme in December 1990-January 1991. In addition, a national seminar in March 1991 examined the Technical Cooperation Orientation Document within the framework of the national technical cooperation assessment and programmes (NaTCAP) exercise.

3. These activities led to the second phase consisting of the elaboration of the Advisory Note which was enriched by a government "Orientation Note" for the preparation of the fifth country programme.

4. During the third phase, the fifth country programme was prepared following a series of meetings with sectoral ministries, government agencies and formulation missions from various United Nations system organizations and agencies. These meetings resulted in a series of sectoral papers focusing on institutional and other weaknesses and corresponding technical cooperation needs to be covered by UNDP in accordance with the Government's development strategy.

5. The Government's objectives, strategies and priorities were based on: (a) the Social and Economic Development Plan presented at the round-table conference held in Geneva in June-July 1987; (b) sectoral strategies and programmes presented to the donors during the sectoral consultations held in Niger from 1988 to 1991; (c) the government memorandum to the second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Paris, 1990; (d) the programme and policy framework on economic and financial policy prepared with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), September 1990; and (e) the guidelines given by the National Conference for the Transition Period (December 1992-January 1993).

6. The present country programme thus reflects the critical concerns of the Government. It represents a framework for mobilization of UNDP resources and for the intervention of United Nations system agencies. Through the round-table and NaTCAP processes, it aims at a better coordination of UNDP cooperation with that of Niger's other development partners.

II. ANALYTICAL COMMENTARY ON THE FIFTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME

7. The proposed country programme focuses on four major national priorities: (a) environmental management and preservation of natural resources; (b) development of human resources; (c) improvement of the Government's capacity to manage the economy; and (d) promotion of the private sector.

8. Given the geographical location of Niger and the vital importance of environmental management, the first area of concentration covers: (a) self-reliance and food security; (b) meeting the country's energy requirements; and (c) re-establishment and preservation of an adequate productive capacity in the agricultural, forestry and livestock sectors through an integrated management of natural resources.

9. To help the Government achieve sustainable development, UNDP is requested to concentrate its cooperation in three areas: integrated management of natural resources, a water and environmental action plan, and a programme of reforestation coupled with the fight against desertification. UNDP has already acquired solid experience in these areas which will be valuable in consolidating ongoing projects and future collaboration with the national programme.

10. For the second area of concentration, the Government aims at improving the development of human resources through basic, primary and vocational education; public health; integration of women in the development process including social integration, training, access to land and support to women's organizations; and the attenuation of the impact of structural adjustment on the most vulnerable social groups. UNDP is requested to assist the Government in each of these areas in close coordination with other development partners.

In the education sector, UNDP will participate in programmes aimed at increasing literacy and access to basic education in line with the recommendations of the Jomtien Conference. It will also cooperate in improving the management of this sector.

11. With respect to the health sector, where a number of donors are active, UNDP will continue its assistance to maternal and infant health programmes and participate in the fight against the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).

12. With respect to the integration of women in development, UNDP will assist in implementing a national programme for the promotion of women in the economic and social progress of the country. In addition, an emphasis will be put on the need to involve women in all community-based development projects.

13. Equally, the social dimension of structural adjustment is already the subject of a long-term project funded by UNDP. What is needed in the next few years is to implement together with other donors its various components into concrete poverty alleviation activities.

14. For the third area of concentration, improvement of management capacity, the current severe crisis of Niger's economy calls for fundamental changes. The proposed programme aims at restructuring existing management institutions, improving the process of elaborating and managing development policies and ensuring a better coordination of external aid. UNDP will reinforce its ongoing assistance to the elaboration and management of development policies within the context of greater liberalization of the economy and decentralization of decision making. Similarly, the coordination of external aid will be strengthened through the round-table process and the launching of the second phase of the NaTCAP exercise.

15. With respect to the fourth area of concentration, promotion of the private sector, the Government intends to accelerate the liberalization of the economy and to improve the environment for private sector development. UNDP is requested to help organize the informal sector and promote the development of small- and medium-size enterprises. Ongoing projects in this area will be consolidated and more comprehensive programmes will be developed to encourage the growth of small productive units in both urban and rural areas.

III. MANAGEMENT OF COUNTRY PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

16. The adoption of the programme approach will require the full integration of the fifth country programme into the government's development strategy. This implies that the Government will assume an increasing part of the

responsibility for the management of the programme through national execution. The experience gained during the fourth country programme indicates that some national institutions and NGOs are able to assume this responsibility; UNDP will support national efforts to develop further the capacity to do so.

17. United Nations system agencies will continue to play an important role, particularly in assisting the Government in formulating sectoral strategies and policies and in implementing specific technical components of ongoing projects and future programmes.

18. In order to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed programme, working groups will be constituted for each of the four themes. These groups will include experts from government agencies, project personnel and UNDP staff. The groups will meet on a regular basis to monitor the implementation of the programme and to take corrective measures as needed. In addition, annual reviews and an in-depth, mid-term review will be conducted.

IV. RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

19. The themes selected for UNDP cooperation are consonant with the Government's development strategy and with the recommendations of Governing Council decision 90/34. The Administrator, therefore, recommends that the Governing Council approve the fifth country programme for Niger.